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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 18, 2015

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Montana Recognized as National Leader in Transparency in Government Spending

Helena, Mont.—A report released today by the U.S. Public Interest Research Group (U.S. PIRG) heralds Montana state government as a national leader in providing transparency in government spending. According to the "2015 Following the Money" report, Montana received an 92 percent, A-rating for spending transparency, up from 86 percent last year, and 57 percent when Governor Steve Bullock took office. The report is released during Sunshine Week, a week to promote public access in government.

"An important part of building a more effective government is ensuring a transparent government," Bullock said. "I put the state's checkbook online in an easily searchable format so Montanans can see how their tax dollars are being spent and to ensure that state agencies seek new ways to responsibly manage state resources."

According to the report, leading states like Montana have created user-friendly websites that provide visitors with accessible information on an array of expenditures. This not only allows Montana residents to find information on specific vendor payments through easy-to-use search features, but provides watchdog groups and the press the opportunity to download and analyze the entire checkbook dataset.

"Our staff has worked tirelessly to bring our transparency grade up from a "F" in 2010 to an "A" today, and we did it without spending additional taxpayer dollars," said Sheila Hogan, director of the Department of Administration. "We will continue to work to further enhance our site with information that the public and media organizations find helpful."

Bullock has made transparency and effective government a pillar of his administration. In his first month in office, Bullock launched Montana's transparency portal when he announced that he was putting the state's checkbook online. Since that time, the portal has expanded to include economic development subsidies, tax expenditure and financial reports, contracts, as well as a data portal for additional government data.

Montana's transparency website is found at transparency.mt.gov.

The "2015 Following the Money" report by the U.S. Public Interest Research Group is available at: <http://uspirg.org/news/usp/new-report-ranks-all-fifty-states-government-spending-transparency>.

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